

Switzerland's Domestic and International Postal Services during July 1, 1862 – November 30, 1891

A Synopsis

A Seven-in-One Exhibit

This new postal history exhibit brings together the most unusual and rarest pieces from seven different, mostly traditional Swiss displays to create a comprehensive view of a very busy era in Swiss postal history. The seven subjects have been the Perforated Sitting Helvetia issue, postal envelopes, postal cards, postal wrapper bands, postage due charges, Swiss mail during the Franco-Prussian War, and private hotel posts. Individually these earlier exhibits have earned gold and large gold awards at U.S., Swiss and international exhibitions.

Domestic Rates

In the domestic area the primary emphasis is on the relatively few basic (although sometimes special) changes in postal service rates, but the descriptions of all items also point out unusual postal markings and adhesive stamp usages. Use of the Perforated Sitting Helvetia issue was extensive because of its availability from 1862 to 1883. However, the exhibit includes earlier and later definitive issues and postal stationery issues that were valid during different overlapping dates within the scope of this exhibit's period. Most of the domestic rates are presented in the introductory pages of the 2000 edition of the *Zumstein Spezialkatalog Schweiz / Specialized Catalog of Switzerland*.

International Destinations

The exhibit is divided into five frames each for domestic and international mail to give equal weight to both types. In the international area the primary emphasis is on worldwide coverage, not comprehensive examples of the literally hundreds of published rates (examples of some still unrecorded). The exhibit goes out of its way to include not only high-rate mail with high-denomination stamps to the different continents but also common mail with common stamps to document common rates within Europe.

Background Information

According to Swiss postal statistics, most mail to international destinations in 1860 went to France (33%), the German-Austrian Postal Union (33%), Italy (17%) and Great Britain (5%), leaving only 12% for the rest of the world. The rates to the German and Austrian areas, based on five zones, were also the most numerous. Letters to other destinations before the advent of the Universal Postal Union, even to several countries in Europe, are often rated extremely rare (2 to 5 known), extremely scarce (6-10) or very scarce (11-15) by Richard Schäfer. His 1995 book *1459-1907 Der Briefpostverkehr Schweiz-Ausland / Swiss Letter Mail to Foreign Countries* reflects his census over many years and contains a rarity table (pp. 102, 433-436) and detailed rate tables to all countries. Letters to Africa and the Caribbean are particularly difficult to find.

Key Items

Although this exhibitor has been collecting this period of Swiss philately for 40 years, only within the last several years have I been able to acquire some of the most important pieces after the retirements and deaths of other collectors or recent discoveries. The breadth of this exhibit cannot be duplicated until its contents reach the philatelic market.

The following list (including frame/page numbers) will locate 10 key items, all recorded as unique. These and other highlights are mounted on red.

2/15: Only recorded example of reduced return postage for rejected printed matter paid by recipient instead of original sender. (*The Collectors Club Philatelist*, March-April 2005, pp. 91-94, Figure 3)

3/4: Only recorded example of 5c registration fee payment on official card with free postage.

5/1: Only recorded example of perforated 2c and imperforate 20rp (a pair) in mixed franking and with 42c total franking during 1851-1867.

5/10: Only recorded strike of straight-line "EIDG.FELDPPOST" (federal field post) military postmark.

6/9: Only recorded use of unacceptable pre-UPU postal card accepted as printed matter by any country. (*The Collectors Club Philatelist*, January-February 2009, pp. 43-44)

7/7: Only recorded example of imperforate 10rp and perforated 20c in mixed franking.

7/7: Only recorded example of perforated Sitting Helvetia stamps used on official telegram form.

8/10: Only recorded example of indicium on 30c postal envelope folded inside out. (*The Collectors Club Philatelist*, January-February 2000, pp. 37-38)

9/2: Only recorded cover to Rhodes before 1882. (See Schäfer)

10/16: Only recorded cover to French Cochinchina before 1882. (See Schäfer)